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ABSTRACT

A description is provided of Johnson County Community College's (JCCC) efforts to reform its general education curriculum. After noting the objectives of the nationwide reform movement, an introductory section discusses the college's replacement of a free elective system with distribution requirements, the development by the General Education Committee of an Aims of General Education statement to guide curriculum development, and initial steps in the creation of a core curriculum. The task of administering the core curriculum development fell to the General Education Subcommittee, and the next section traces the deliberations of this body over what form of core to specify. This section presents the subcommittee's recommendations concerning a non-mandated core curriculum, suggesting the creation of foundational courses in Communication Skills, Quantification and Symbolic Analysis, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities; and three courses designed to improve students' awareness of technological advances, contemporary cultures, and healthy lifestyles, and one course conducted as a seminar that would focus on current issues. Next, the collaborative process used in course development is explained, and the resulting core curriculum is presented. Brief descriptions are provided for each of the courses that fulfill foundational and special focus requirements. The final section underscores the place of the core curriculum as an alternative to rather than as a replacement for the distribution elective requirements, and reviews the aims of general education at JCCC. Appendixes include the charge to the general education core curriculum developers, principles for the identification of general education courses, the Aims of General Education statement, and a statement on the implications of general education for the core curriculum. (JMC)

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JCCC

Johnson
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Creating an Alternative General Education Core Curriculum

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JC 890 252

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Introduction

For more than a decade, general education reform has been a major agenda item for America's colleges. Fueled by a series of critical books and reports and subsequent public outcry, a storm of controversy has raged within and without the profession. The apparent inability of our educational system to develop even the most basic skills society requires of its citizens has led colleges and universities to re-examine their curricula, especially their general education requirements.

General education reform at community colleges poses more problems than it does at colleges and universities. The occupational program requirements at community colleges, which often are market-driven, must be balanced against general education needs. This can create considerable institutional conflict, which is made even more complicated by the part-time, non-degree-seeking status of many community college students.

Even students who intend to seek liberal arts degrees make course selections on the basis of transfer prerequisites or personal interest. Moreover, many community colleges, traditionally committed to access, view restoring traditional requirements as exclusionary and adverse to the developmental student population.

Nonetheless, the majority of community colleges in the 1980s have begun to increase their general education requirements for all their degrees.

JCCC began to reform its general education curriculum in 1984, somewhat later than many community colleges. This was due to the predominately liberal arts character of its curriculum, which reflected the lower division requirements of the senior colleges to which the majority of the college's students intended to transfer.

An initial reform effort resulted in the adoption of distribution requirements that were more structured than the free elective system (with individual program plans) that it replaced. However, this attempt still did not ensure that students would gain any common educational experience much beyond their Composition I courses. In fact, the college would have been pressed to maintain that these students received equivalent, let alone similar, educational experiences.

The General Education Committee, which had steered the adoption of the distribution categories and the identification of foundational courses in each category, developed an Aims of General Education statement in 1986 that was to serve as the unifying vision for general education at JCCC and to articulate the contributions expected from the approved courses. This statement, with its curricular implications, explains the components of a general education program from both a content and a process perspective. It also provides the basis for measurement of the success of the program in achieving its aims through student growth and development.

Nevertheless, everyone connected with the thrust of general education at JCCC recognized that the aims statement represented a philosophical description of what we ought to be about, but did not provide any recommended curriculum that would achieve these aims in a structured, coherent, purposeful manner. This continuing concern for coherence in the general education curriculum led the administration to issue a challenge to the JCCC faculty in the spring of 1986 to develop a core curriculum that would specifically address the aims of general education adopted by the college two years earlier.

In a memorandum to the faculty, Dan Radakovich, vice president for academic affairs, wrote, "I am putting this challenge forward as an opportunity that rarely occurs in higher education. It offers the chance to construct what you believe is the very best course of study in general education in a community college. I am hoping that you will see the exciting possibilities created by this opportunity."

The task of administering the core curriculum development fell to the General Education Subcommittee. The subcommittee's first undertaking was to wrestle with the nature of a core curriculum. Should it consist of existing primary courses in the disciplines, or should this opportunity be taken to transcend disciplinary specialization? Should the distribution categories be recognized in a core curriculum or should new areas of competency be included, such as computer and technological literacy?

The administration's challenge to the faculty had resulted in a flood of course proposals for the core, but due to a lack of prior agreement on what constituted a general education core, these courses had little in common, and many did not comply with earlier specified principles for identification of general education courses — to be college level, to be truly general rather than narrow, and to be foundational as opposed to upper-level or advanced.

What Form of Core?

In deliberating over what form of core to specify, the subcommittee considered several alternatives and weighed their advantages and disadvantages. Many of the faculty proposals recommended the selection of existing courses that they considered to be more foundational than others on the approved lists of general education course selections. The subcommittee termed this the "primary course solution" and noted the advantage of providing students with basic disciplinary foundations that would prepare them for advanced level studies. However, there was a strong sentiment expressed that existing primary courses were too narrow, possibly outdated, and were primarily taught from an information-imparting perspective in opposition to what our aims of general education recommended.

Other faculty proposals for the core suggested developing a set of integrative foundational courses that would combine insights from related disciplines — say in the social sciences or humanities — and provide an overview of the field with emphasis upon connections rather than separate concepts, methods and information. The main concern with this approach involved acceptance of such courses for transfer.

As fortune would have it, good fortune in this instance, the subcommittee decided that this issue was too broad to submit to the faculty and expect them to resolve without providing substantial leadership. As an alternative, they decided to propose a tentative structure for a core curriculum to their parent Educational Affairs Committee and receive that committee's endorsement before formally soliciting course proposals from the faculty.

The issue of the form of the core occupied the General Education Subcommittee throughout the fall semester of 1986, but in December the group had reached a consensus and submitted its recommendation for the core curriculum structure to Educational Affairs. That report said a great deal about the kinds of decisions that must be made in developing a core curriculum and provides a clear trail of the thinking that shaped the alternative core.

> ***We essentially have two components of our general education program in place: a statement of aims and its implications for the curriculum and distribution categories with required hours along with an approved list of courses to satisfy those hours. While some people refer to the approved course list as a "core curriculum," it is apparent that such a description seriously distorts the common understanding of a core. In truth, the***

categories and courses constitute a "smorgasbord" of sorts, which primarily reflects the organization of disciplines most common in higher education. The guidelines for selection of courses in each category merely speak to level, desired breadth, intended student audience and program situs. They say nothing about the content of general education or its form.

On the other hand, we have developed, modified and adopted a comprehensive aims of general education statement that says much about the outcomes and processes to be employed. This statement expresses the aims of our general education program in terms of a point of view as well as essential knowledge and skills students should acquire or develop. It, too, does not specify the curricular form or the content necessary to achieve these outcomes. Essentially, the aims and their implications for the curriculum provide the basis for identification of courses serving general education functions, although they have not been employed in this manner because we have the co-existent distribution requirements. Our aims of general education identify the needs of individuals in a contemporary world that is certain to change and will call for a repertoire of knowledge and skills that will prepare them to meet these changes. It is more learner-based and reflective of contemporary conditions than the traditional liberal arts rationale.

But the question is whether the distribution requirement system we have in place supports achievement of the aims we specify, or whether it is, as William Bennett has said of Harvard's curriculum, only a "symbolic nod, a head feint," in the direction of general education. Even casual review of the approved list provokes one to wonder how we would expect to achieve any consistent development of essential knowledge or universal competencies from such a disparate array of choices. Yet we believe that the diverse needs of our students in the associate of arts degree track obligates us to preserve flexibility and options, so we are reluctant to mandate a curriculum that must be taken by all students, even though a set of fundamental courses, ordered, purposive and coherent, would more likely support achievement of our general education aims. Consequently, we have undertaken to develop a non-mandated core that would be specifically designed to fit the aims of general education.

Much like Harvard's process, we propose to use the aims statement to guide the identification of courses selected for the core, but unlike Harvard's resulting core, which contains over 200 courses, we hope to create a more unified, coherent

curriculum with a clear order and purpose. The non-mandated core could demonstrate what is possible for a community college to do with a general education program, and it could provide a basis for measuring the effectiveness of our achievement of the aims of general education.

What Form of a Core?

We have adopted as our definition of a core curriculum the following description:

> *A set of fundamental courses that are ordered, purposive and coherent and that satisfy our aims of general education and their implications.*

The subcommittee saw considerable merit in the primary course approach since it acknowledges the importance of basic discipline exposure, but we also recognize that the disciplines are quite narrow and specialized and when studied individually do not necessarily lead to an understanding of the basic ways of knowing what the fields in which the disciplines are housed represent. However, we believe that the non-mandated core should comply with the Principles for Identification of General Education Courses adopted by the board in January 1984, and should, therefore, be in conformity with principle (3).

> *"General Education courses should be foundational and deal with the fundamental concepts, methods, problems and theories of a discipline or disciplines . . . "*

Therefore, the subcommittee recommends that the first level of studies consists of five foundational courses, two that address universal competencies (communication skills and quantitative and symbolic analysis) and three that address essential areas of knowledge (natural sciences, social sciences and humanities).

Foundation Level

Communication Skills	*6 credits*
Quantification and Symbolic Analysis	*6 credits*
Natural Sciences	*8 credits*
Social Sciences	*6 credits*
Humanities	*6 credits*
	32 credits

The courses in the essential areas of knowledge would introduce students to the foundational elements of these fields through the introduction of key vocabulary, concepts, theories, schools of thought, subdisciplines and methodologies. These courses would not be restricted to one or two disciplines, but would compositely provide an overview of each area of knowledge.

The communication skills course clearly addresses a universal competency specified by our Aims of General Education through an integrated approach. The natural and social sciences courses and the course on quantification address the acquisition of essential knowledge, in particular under the category of patterns of knowledge and belief. These courses should examine the ways of knowing the world that are involved in each field, and they should especially teach students to understand and apply the following:

> *Methods and techniques for determining the warrant of hypotheses and claims.*
>
> *Methods for gathering information and data and interpreting their significance.*
>
> *Use of quantification techniques in measuring, comparing, calculating, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating where appropriate in a field of study.*

Further, all of the courses should contribute to the development of the essential skills of information management and critical thinking as they are explained in the aims and the implications statements. The humanities courses would primarily address the second category of essential knowledge, i.e., forming and applying values. Here we have stated that, "The educated person should understand how personal, social, ethical and aesthetic values are formed, and he should be able to select and apply values in a conscious, critical manner." Certainly the humanities represent a fundamental way of knowing as well, and their purpose is revelatory as well as reflective of values.

These aims primarily suggest the shape of the content, but they do not determine its precise nature. This decision is to be left to the faculty in these areas. The subcommittee would judge the merits of proposed courses on how well they address the purposes and aims specified here and in the Implications of the Aims Statement.

The second level of the core curriculum would consist of three courses designed to improve students' awareness of technological advances, contemporary cultures and healthy lifestyles, and one applications

course conducted as a seminar that would focus on current issues or problems and require the active application of values, skills and knowledge in a major paper.

Second Level	
Technologies That Shape the World	*3 credits*
Contemporary World Cultures	*3 credits*
Health, Productivity and Longevity	*2 credits*
Contemporary Issues Seminar	*1 credit*
	9 credits

These courses constitute a set of fundamental courses that are ordered in the manner that foundational skills and knowledge lead to advance study and application, they are purposive in that they address all four categories of essential knowledge in the aims statement as well as generalizable skills, and they will be made coherent through incorporation of the Point of View and Important Principles of our Aims statement in their procedures.

Developing the Courses

With Educational Affairs' acceptance of the core structure, the subcommittee was able to formally solicit course proposals that fit the structure and addressed specific areas of the Aims of General Education. This solicitation took place in the spring of 1987. As a result, 11 proposals for new courses were accepted, and three existing courses were accepted for revision. Several of the courses were proposed as team-developed and team-taught efforts.

A group of course developers, committed to a year-long process of collaborative course building, were offered contracts for released time from their teaching responsibilities or supplemental stipends. They met every three weeks throughout the fall and spring semesters to critique each unit submitted for group review by the developers. Although for management purposes roughly half of the courses were developed in each semester, the core developers were responsible for review of other course units even in the semester that they themselves were not submitting units. The group was directed by Landon Kirchner, who had chaired the General Education Subcommittee since its inception.

The process was genuinely collaborative. Reviewers made helpful suggestions to their colleagues regarding resources, classroom activities, assignments and evaluation strategies. In several instances, even content errors were corrected when someone had more up-to-date

information than the developer. This review process was facilitated by the use of a standard form for unit development, which is attached in the appendixes. Although not every developer chose to use the format suggested, all were required to address eight features in describing their units to the group: the concept or issue involved, essential information, insights, instructional activities planned, resources to be used, assignments for students, student engagement expectations and evaluation techniques.

The core developers were provided with a specific charge that incorporated not only their individual contributions but focused the collective group responsibilities as well.

A collaborative process of curriculum building is a novel experience for faculty accustomed to creating course proposals individually. When it seemed that unit presenters were spending more time on content discussion and focusing less on how those units addressed our general education aims, each unit presenter was required to address the following questions:

1. How is this course conveying fundamental concepts, principles, theories, methods and problems of the disciplines involved?
   a. Is the unit topic a vehicle for exposing and communicating these disciplinary elements or is it smothering them beneath the subject matter?
   b. Would a student completing this course or sequence in the field have better, equivalent or less understanding of how this area formulates knowledge and determines the warrant of hypotheses and claims?
2. How does this course support the point of view of general education regarding the dynamic nature of knowledge, values, social arrangements and technological changes?
3. How does this course ensure active engagement of the learners that leads to decision making or values discovery?
4. How does this course promote the development of essential skills?
   a. What techniques, evaluation processes or activities require the use of communication skills by learners?
   b. How will this course involve information management skills?
   c. How is critical thinking required and how are students expected to demonstrate the use of critical thinking skills?

In a short time, it became clear to the developers group that the point of specifying the features to be described in each unit was to ensure that the Aims of General Education were consciously addressed in each unit rather than appended after the course had been constructed. From that point on, it was no longer necessary to have these questions addressed, since the unit presenters began integrating them into their descriptions of the unit's features, as had originally been the intent.

The Result

By May '88 the core developers had completed their task. A fully developed set of courses with complete units was ready to be shaped into the form that could be presented to Educational Affairs. This task fell to the chair of the General Education Subcommittee, who created a booklet containing a history of general education at JCCC, the course proposal documents and outlines, and a compilation of the complete units for each course. While course descriptions are always too abbreviated to convey the richness and depth of the courses themselves, they do serve to flesh out course titles to some degree, and we include them here.

I. Foundational Level — 32 credits

A. Communications

COM 125 Oral and Written Communications (new) — 6 credits

Jack Halligan and Dick Stine, developers

This course is intended and designed to provide the student with the unique opportunity to combine the two primary modes of communication, writing and speaking, so their natural connections can be demonstrated. Students will learn research skills and apply them to significant topics in written papers and speeches. Critical thinking, group process and argumentation will be employed to further this process. The course is equivalent to ENGL 121 and SPD 121 for the purposes of transfer equivalency.

B. Quantification and Symbolic Analysis

MATH 165 Finite Math: A Cultural Approach (new) — 3 credits
Penny Seavertson, developer

This course is the first part of a two-semester sequence of courses on the beauty, scope, practical application and relevance of mathematics. It is designed to involve the student with concepts as well as quantitative skills. Topics include inductive and deductive reasoning, mathematical patterns, sets, topology, non-euclidean geometry, probability, statistics and matrices. The common themes throughout the course are innovations in personal computers, related mathematical and cultural history, and reasoning ability.

MATH 175 Discrete Math and Its Applications (new) — 3 credits
Doug Proffer, developer

This course is the second of a two-semester sequence of courses on the beauty, scope, practical application and relevance of mathematics. It will focus on applications of general interest primarily drawn from the social and biological sciences and business. Topics will be placed in a historical context and mathematical reasoning will be stressed. Many of the applications will be computer-oriented.

C. Natural Sciences

SCI 121 Science: A Dynamic Process (new) — 4 credits
Pat Schroeder, developer

This course is an introduction to the process of learning about the natural world through science. Hands-on experiments will be done in the laboratory. Development of conceptual schemes will be seen in case studies in biology, chemistry, physics and geology. The course leads into Physical Science or Principles of Biology.

BIOL 122 Principles of Biology and Lab (revised) 4 credits
Marilyn Shopper, liaison

This is a general introductory biology course. Although a variety of scientific areas are included in this survey course, none of the material covered will be too highly scientific or too difficult for the beginning student to comprehend. The student will be responsible for material covered both in lecture classes and in the textbook.

BIOL 123 Principles of Biology Laboratory

This is a general introductory biology laboratory course. This course will include experiments and observations using basic biological processes that will enable the student to better understand the science of life. Emphasized will be the correct use of the microscope, proper laboratory techniques and the analysis of data. Students enrolled in this course must also be enrolled in Principles of Biology (SCI 122).

Or

PSCI 120 Physical Science (revised) 4 credits
Bob Hunt, liaison

This course is an introduction to the fundamental concepts and principles of physics, chemistry, astronomy and geology. It is counted toward laboratory science requirements and is intended for non-science majors. It includes the presentation of material through audiovisual-tutorial as well as computer-tutorial aids. Two hours of class and four hours of work in the open lab are required each week.

D. Humanities

HIST 124 Community Life and Values (new) 3 credits
Jim Jackson, developer

This course offers a study of the cultural values associated with classical Rome, Renaissance Florence and baroque Rome. The architecture, literature, visual arts and philosophy of the three periods will be examined, and the values revealed will be compared to those of a modern community/city.

HUM 136 The Human Experience (new) 3 credits
Harry Langdon, developer

The themes of freedom and personal identity are traced in the arts and sciences from the classical period of the 18th century through the romanticism of revolution in politics and the arts and finally in more modern idioms. The course concludes with a consideration of each student's personal identity through family language.

E. Social Sciences

POLS 130 Political Economy: Power in Society (new) 3 credits
Chuck Bishop and Ruth Slesser, developers

This course examines the economic and political dimensions of social power as a vehicle for introducing students to the social sciences. This is the first course in a two-course sequence, the purpose of which is to explain how the social sciences constitute a unique way of describing and understanding our world. The concept of power is used to show commonalities and differences in the social sciences and to examine the language, methods, scope and manifestations of power through authority, force and influence. Through these, the significance of political economy is revealed.

SOC 160 Social Power: Motivation and Action (new) 3 credits
Fred Krebs and Nan Wilson, developers

This course concentrates on the socio-psychological aspects of power. Topics include the development of personality, the role of social class and ideology, the mechanics of domination and subordination, discrimination, economic inequality, powerlessness and the search for community. Basic terminology and theoretical foundations of both sociology and psychology are the heart of the course.

II. Special Focus Studies — 9 credits

A. Cross-cultural Awareness

ANTH 210 Peoples of the World (new) — 3 credits
Rebecca Cramer, developer

This interdisciplinary course draws on economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology to better understand the increasing global connections between peoples and societies. Students will investigate the cultural basis of values, beliefs and behavior and learn how this affects their relationships both within their communities and across cultural boundaries. Specific topics include the individual in North America today, the North American's relationship to the peoples of Earth, Earth as an economic system, views of work in the United States and other countries, comparative political participation, and cross-cultural value systems.

B. Technological Awareness

TECH 220 Technological Literacy (new) — 3 credits
Burgess Burch and John Fowler, developers

This course is an overview of technology in our society. The study begins with a definition of technology and a historical perspective of technological trends. Major course components also include in-depth looks at energy, manufactured materials, electronics and computers, and transportation. The impact of these on society and individuals is also assessed.

C. Personal Development

HLT 260 Lifetime Wellness: A Personal Goal (new) — 3 credits
Peggy Ford, Barbara Gill, Carolyn Green, Barbara Joiner and Penny Marshall, developers

This course offers an overall view of health care trends today. Specific areas include exercise, nutrition, stress management, illness risk factors and holistic health. The primary focus will be on health maintenance, and participants will be actively involved in an examination of their own

health status. This course is concerned with improving fitness levels through guided physical activity. Assessment information will be entered into a personalized Life Inventory Computer Program to provide information for the participants' plans to improve and maintain their lifetime fitness and wellness.

Summary

The general education core curriculum at JCCC is intended to be an alternative rather than a replacement for the distribution elective requirements. As was originally noted, the elective system flourishes because it accommodates the needs of a diverse student body and has practical merit as well. The core curriculum courses are very much instructor-dependent, and because of their initial need to be team-taught in some instances, they are less cost efficient than traditional single-instructor, multiple-section courses. Were the core curriculum mandated for all associate of arts degree seekers, it would require a very different set of courses so that they could be scheduled for an 11,000-member student body at all hours of the day as well as evenings and weekends. The elective system makes this kind of scheduling feasible, but it would require a severely truncated core of courses capable of being taught by many faculty to accomplish the same accessibility. Yet even as an alternative, the core curriculum represents a rare opportunity for serious students to enroll in a genuine course of study intended to satisfy some very important aims of general education.

The superiority of this alternative core curriculum needs, of course, to be demonstrated through comparative assessment of students' abilities to achieve the stated Aims of General Education, but at this point the evident quality of the courses developed is a strong indication that JCCC faculty have met the challenge posed for them by the college's administration to develop a focused alternative core curriculum. It is equally as evident, however, that the faculty must now focus the same attention on each course listed in the general education distribution requirements for graduation. In the preface to the Aims of General Education, Kirchner spoke to this need.

> *The overarching aim of any general education program should be the development of the learner along the lines we view as beneficial to our society and compatible with the conditions of the contemporary world. With this in mind, we note that the one constant in the lives of our students will be change: change in social arrangements, values, work, technology and knowledge.*

We need to not only prepare them to deal with and accept these changes, but to encourage them to contribute to and direct these changes, particularly as they pertain to their personal circumstances.

Students need an orientation, essential knowledge and the requisite skills to think for themselves, confront novel situations, determine the merit of beliefs or values proposed for their adoption, and learn new things and acquire new skills on their own. In short, they need to be encouraged and supported to become mature, autonomous individuals.

It is precisely this autonomous perspective that makes higher education distinct from lower levels of education. We recognize that adults have capacities for reflective thought and tolerance for ambiguities that are not present in children and adolescents, and we believe that the cultivation of these capacities is an appropriate function of higher education. The maturity of the learner calls for a type of education that goes beyond socialization and encourages individual autonomy in thought and choice.

By adopting this approach to general education, it is possible to develop a coherent mission from the diverse alternatives of a distribution requirement system. If every general education course is designed in both its content and methodology to develop the point of view we recommend and to contribute in its own way to the important insights, essential knowledge and required skills or competencies that support that point of view, then the development of the learner can become the common concern of all faculty who participate in the general education courses.

JCCC's alternative core curriculum is one way of promoting this overarching aim of higher education.

August 1987

Charge to the General Education Core Curriculum Developers

Goal: To develop a set of fundamental courses that are ordered, purposive and coherent and that satisfy our aims of general education.

Specifying a set of fundamental courses means that while we have not selected the primary course route, we still desire to communicate an understanding of the fundamental concepts, principles, theories, methods and problems of the disciplines, but through a more integrated approach than the primary courses encourage. This is a target that the developers must keep in mind. There are distinct ways of viewing the world and fundamental competencies that form the content base reflected in the credit distribution for the core curriculum. The core courses have been selected because they show promise of being vehicles for conveying these foundational competencies and knowledge. This purpose is primary.

However, the core courses must also be directed to satisfying the other aims of general education, in particular to communicate a point of view, reflect important principles and develop desired skills. These are secondary objectives that should be addressed by the processes adopted in the instructional activities as well as the content of each of the courses. It is critical that the core course developers build in content, processes and activities that will individually support, and hopefully collectively achieve, these aims of general education.

Indeed, the coherence we seek is not to be found solely in the content of the core courses, as might occur if we had selected a thematic approach to general education. Rather, the coherence will lie in the collective commitment of the course developers and implementors to the achievement of the aims of general education as they are expressed in our original aims statement and our subsequent implications statement, both of which are appended. This makes collective, cooperative development imperative, and this is the reason we have gathered as a group.

Principles for Identification of General Education Courses

1. General education courses should be *college-level* courses and not compensatory or remedial.

2. General education courses should be truly general and not narrow specializations or courses intended for select audiences.

3. General education courses should be foundational and deal with the fundamental concepts, methods, problems and theories of a discipline, or disciplines in the case of interdisciplinary courses. Upper-level courses that require foundational prerequisites should not be considered general education.

4. General education should aim to achieve both a breadth in the student's educational experience and the transmission of skills and perspective. Consolidation of courses in a single area or the demonstration of skill achievement alone does not satisfy these aims.

5. General education should be desirable for all students as expressed in the degree requirements. Consideration of the purpose of the separate degrees should be taken into account, but impact of the requirements on particular programs ought not to be a guiding principle. Courses designed and adopted by a career program cannot be used to fulfill general education requirements for that same program.

6. There must be opportunity for general education refinement. This may include new courses, new content, new practices or new configurations for general education.

The Aims of General Education

Development of a Point of View

General education should encourage students to understand and accept that knowledge, values and social arrangements are dynamic and in need of continuous review. It should encourage them to adopt a thoughtful, questioning, examining attitude and a tolerance for ambiguity and the open-ended character of important issues. Moreover, general education should encourage the active and persistent application of this attitude throughout one's life and encourage students to take control and responsibility for their own direction.

Implications for the Curriculum

The process of general education is every bit as important as its content. Instructional processes should emphasize student engagement of the issues and encourage autonomous decision making.

Classroom activities and assigned study should emphasize active participation on the part of the student and not passive reception of information.

Students should be required to make discriminating decisions between competing alternatives and to support those decisions.

Students should be encouraged to construct alternatives to the theories, interpretations, positions or views being studied.

Adherence to Important Principles

General education should aim at the development of people who will embody the following important principles.

1. They will not depend upon authority alone for determination of their beliefs.
2. They will employ techniques for determining truth that permit correction and dialogue.
3. They will be able to acquire new knowledge and skills on their own.
4. They will be able to subject cultural beliefs and values to critical, reflective thought.
5. They will consciously select values they hold and accept responsibility for their selection.
6. They will be concerned with and will accept some responsibility for contemporary events.
7. They will take responsibility for their own personal growth and development.

Implications for the Curriculum

Course content should include controversies in the field of study and dissenting views wherever possible.

The historical precedents that shaped current theories, or were replaced by them, should be included in the course content.

Students should be introduced to research techniques and resources for further independent inquiry in a field of study.

Instructors should avoid authoritarian or dogmatic practices in favor of providing reasons, evidence, justification and warrants for views advocated or discussed.

Students should be encouraged to take stands on issues discussed, particularly on current events.

Instructors should identify and clarify assumptions and theories in a discipline and explain alternative views wherever possible.

Acquisition of Essential Knowledge

The educated person is expected to understand and be able to apply:

1. Methods and techniques for determining the warrant of hypotheses and claims.
2. Methods for gathering information and data and interpreting their significance.
3. Quantitative measurement and analysis of phenomena in the natural and social domains.
4. Historical insights into important cultural epochs.
5. Frameworks for the development and evaluation of value systems and claims.
6. Knowledge of the contemporary world and interdependence of various cultures.
7. Knowledge of the relationship of man to the scientific and technological world.
8. Knowledge of oneself and insight into the relationship between oneself and others.
9. Knowledge of various forms of creative self-expression.

Implications for the Curriculum

Students should be taught to independently evaluate theories, proposals and claims in every field of study.

Students should be required to interpret information through categorization and explanation of meaning and significance. Mastery of information should not be the primary goal.

Students should be required to use quantitative abilities in measuring, comparing, calculating, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating where appropriate in a field of study.

Students should be required to exhibit an understanding of our current society as well as those of other cultures, both present and past.

Students should be encouraged to engage ethical issues and to adopt positions in full awareness of alternative views.

Students should be encouraged to relate knowledge to their personal circumstances and to apply these insights to their own growth and development.

Creative self-expression should be encouraged in all fields of study.

Development of Skills or Competencies

The educated person is expected to exhibit the following skills and competencies.

1. Communication Skills
   Writing
   Speaking
   Listening
   Reading
   Visual interpretation
2. Information Management Skills
   Resource identification
   (Finding sources using basic research skills)
   Interpretation and summarization
   (Description, categorization, comparison, analysis, synthesis)
   Quantitative analysis
   (Measuring, estimating, calculating, formal analysis)
   Logical analysis
   (Presuppositions, form, structure, implications, consequences)
   Retrieval and presentation
   (Notetaking, outlining, storing and manipulating, formatting)
3. Cognitive and Problem-solving Skills
   Thematic analysis
   (Forming and articulating complex concepts)
   Analogizing
   (Testing a new situation against known relationships)
   Suspension of closure
   (Prioritizing factors before shaping a solution)
   Intellectual flexibility
   (Capacity to see all sides of complicated or controversial issues and willing adaption to change)
   Autocensorship
   (Testing a solution covertly before affirmation)
4. Valuing Competencies
   Identify one's personal values.
   Identify value systems operating in our culture.
   Understand value systems of different cultures.
   Interpret the relationship between values and social change, e.g., scientific and technological development.
   Make value judgments and identify consequences and alternatives.
5. Personal Development Skills
   Understand theories of personal growth.
   Relate to others in useful, productive ways.
   Accept responsibility for personal well being.
   Express personal positions regarding contemporary events.

Implications for the Curriculum

The development of these skills cannot be successfully accomplished through instruction in a single course and must be seen as the responsibility of the entire array of general education courses. Acquisition of these skills takes practice. To ensure that they are practiced, they must be made a part of the instructional, assignment and evaluation processes in individual courses wherever possible. Lecturing on information and testing on factual knowledge alone will not assist the achievement of the aims of general education. Every general education course should require students to exercise the highest level of communication skills, information management skills and cognitive skills as can be feasibly applied in that discipline, and should stimulate students to make personal value judgments and compare those to possible alternatives.

Implications of General Education for the Core Curriculum

Point of View

Goal: To communicate the changing character of knowledge.

To ensure that the students learn to appreciate the dynamic nature of knowledge, values, social arrangements and technological advancements, the general education core should encourage the adoption of a thoughtful, questioning, examining attitude through consideration of assumptions, controversies and historical changes in every area of study. The following guidelines should be followed in every core course.

Course content should include controversies in the field of study and dissenting views wherever possible.

The historical procedures that shaped current theories, or were replaced by them, should be included in the course content.

Instructors should identify and clarify assumptions and theories in a discipline and explain alternative views wherever possible.

Instructors should avoid authoritarian or dogmatic practices in favor of providing reasons, evidence, justification and warrants for views advocated or discussed.

Important Principles

Goal: The development of an active learner.

To ensure active engagement on the part of the student that leads to decision making, the following guidelines should be followed.

Instructional processes should emphasize student engagement of the issues and encourage autonomous decision making.

Classroom activities and assigned study should emphasize active participation on the part of the student and not passive reception of information.

Students should be required to make discriminating decisions between competing alternatives and to support those decisions.

Students should be encouraged to construct alternatives to the theories, interpretations, positions or views being studied.

Students should be encouraged to take stands on issues discussed, particularly current events.

Students should be introduced to research techniques and resources for further independent inquiry in a field of study.

Suggestion: The core curriculum might emphasize projects as a common instruction technique. Each course might be built around five or six projects the students would undertake individually or in groups. Students would be required to research the topic, present their findings and conclusions in appropriate forms, and adopt positions they could defend. The instructional focus would be on preparing students for each project rather than covering a certain amount of material.

Essential Knowledge

Goal: To acquire knowledge that is fundamental to the functioning of an educated person.

The essential knowledge that should be conveyed by a general education core may be divided into four categories.

1. Patterns of Knowledge and Belief
   The educated person should be able to understand and apply the following:
   - Methods and techniques for determining the warrant of hypotheses and claims.
   - Methods for gathering information and data and interpreting their significance.
   - Quantitative measurement and analysis of phenomena in the natural and social domains.

   Students should be taught to independently evaluate theories, proposals and claims to every field of study.

   Students should be required to interpret information through categorization and explanation of meaning and significance. Mastery of information should not be the primary goal.

   Students should be required to use quantitative abilities in measuring, comparing, calculating, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating where appropriate in a field of study.

2. Forming and Applying Values
   The educated person should understand how personal, social, ethical and aesthetic values are formed, and he should be able to select and apply values in a conscious, critical manner.

   Students should be able to perform the following:
   - Identify one's personal values.
   - Identify value systems operating in our culture.
   - Understand value systems of different cultures.
   - Interpret the relationship between values and social change, e.g., scientific and technological development.
   - Make value judgments and identify consequences and alternatives.
   - Understand theories of personal growth.
   - Relate to others in useful, productive ways.
   - Accept responsibility for personal well-being.
   - Express personal positions regarding contemporary events.
   - Understand various forms of creative self-expression.

3. Cultural Awareness

The educated person should be aware of the important features of his culture and understand how it compares with previous cultures and other current ones.

Students should be required to demonstrate an understanding of important cultural epochs in both the Western and non-Western worlds.

Students should be knowledgeable about contemporary world affairs and sensitive to the interdependence of various cultures.

4. Technological Awareness

The educated person should understand how science and technology contribute to our productive activities and how they impact our lives and culture.

Students should have an awareness of the major fields of scientific inquiry and how they are related.

Students should understand the major scientific and technological advances that have shaped the world we live in.

Universal Competencies

Goal: To develop generalizable skills that are essential to all human enterprises and can be expected to last a lifetime.

Three essential skills may be said to pervade all human endeavors and should be developed by the general education core curriculum. These are communication skills, information management and critical thinking.

Communication skills include writing, speaking, listening, reading and use of media.

Information management includes the following:

Resource identification
(Finding sources using basic research skills)

Interpretation and summarization
(Description, categorization, comparison, analysis, synthesis)

Quantitative analysis
(Measuring, estimating, calculating, formal analysis)

Logical analysis
(Presuppositions, form, structure, implications, consequences)

Retrieval and presentation
(Negotiating, outlining, storing and manipulating, formatting)

Critical thinking involves the following important abilities:

Analytical skills
- Accurately identify the critical issues involved.
- Identify principles or themes that relate experiences or data.
- Define the parameters of a problem.
- Analyze interrelationships of events and ideas from several perspectives.
- Derive a conclusion from given premises.

Problem Solving
- Identify the problem and needs of a situation.
- Formulate questions relevant to clarifying a problem.
- Develop hypotheses for testing.
- Identify resource materials useful in solving a problem.
- Design models, strategies, experiments, tests or plans.
- Create innovative solutions to complex problems.

Intellectual flexibility
- Identify presuppositions that underlie positions.
- Project consequences of various views or actions.
- Prioritize factors before shaping a conclusion.
- Adapt one's behavior and concepts to changing conditions.
- Recognize the appeal of alternative or opposing points of view.
- Test a solution covertly before formation.

Johnson County Community College
Core Curriculum Course Unit Information

(Unit)

Concept or Issue:

Information	Insights	Instructional

Student Engagement Expectations:

Evaluation Techniques:

(Page)

Activities	Resources	Assignments

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A documental history of general education at Johnson County Community College and complete materials on each of the courses in the core curriculum have been assembled in a booklet, which is available upon request from Landon Kirchner, assistant dean of humanities and social sciences.

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